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um sports

OPPOSING COACHES OPTIMISTIC

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By Tom Wendelburg
UM Sports Information Writer

MISSOULA--

Head coaches Don Robbins of Idaho and Jack Swarthout have more than one thing in common following the Vandals' 21-12 upset of the defending Big Sky champ Grizzlies Saturday at Donblaser Field.

Both believe they have good shots at the title. With the Grizzlies 0-1 in the conference (3-1 over-all), and the Vandals 1-1 (2-2 over-all), most of the games are still ahead. But the Grizzlies may be tested severely Saturday when they face Boise State at Boise. The Broncos whipped Idaho 42-14 earlier this season.

"We still have a track to the title," Swarthout said. "This is a fine bunch of players, and we'll work hard to come back. Actually, we played a good game, (the rushing yardage was 322), but we simply made mistakes at the wrong times."

The two mentors also face uncertain budgets, with the wage-price freeze cutting into their programs. Robbins has another problem. Idaho University will be polling the students regarding their desire to build up the Athletic program, maintain present Big Sky affiliations, or reduce the intercollegiate program. "It's the kind of thing that's happening around the country today," the coach added.

"The Montana win will give us momentum going into Homecoming next week," Robbins said. "It will be the first game in our new domed stadium, the first time most of our seniors have ever played before the home folks after 23 consecutive road games over three years. I believe college football should be played for the home students and fans, but we're finally getting around to it."

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Though the final scoring was Fred Riley's touchdown run with 4:03 remaining in the third period, the teams turned the ball over to the other often enough so that the outcome was in doubt until the final minutes.

Swarthout and Robbins agreed that the most important turning point was the 64-yard run by sophomore quarterback Rick Seefried for the go-ahead touchdown which put Idaho ahead 14-12 with 8:40 to go in the third stanza. "We put in the rollout option especially for Montana," Robbins said. "Rick was under instruction to overthrow his receivers if they were covered, but not to scramble and risk a loss."

If the game had a second turning point, it occurred on the same option play. The Vandals recovered a Montana fumble on the next series, but the Grizzly defense held them for three downs. On fourth down, deep in Montana territory, Seefried was seemingly tackled, but flipped a short flat pass to running back Frank Doctor. The play was good for a first down on the Montana 16, and six plays later Fred Riley skirted three yards around right end for the final score of the game, with more than a quarter left to play.

When Montana was playing catch-up football in the fourth quarter, a lost fumble and a pass interception gave the ball back to Idaho.

Late in the game Sparky Kottke returned an Idaho punt 18 yards to the Montana 38, but on the first play of the series, Idaho recovered a fumble. On the Vandals' second play, Riley fumbled, and Montana's Curt Reynolds recovered. The Grizzlies were forced to punt, but on the third play of the next Idaho series, Montana linebacker Dennis Doyle recovered Doctor's fumble. Montana's last chance faded on the next play with Vandal linebacker Ron Linehan's interception of a Gary Berding pass. Idaho retained possession by moving for a first down, and didn't turn the ball over until the past play of the game.

Montana's Steve Caputo, the leading rusher in the Big Sky conference, led all runners with 159 yards in 27 carries. He has had outstanding first half performances the past two weeks, making 134 yards against Cal Poly and 122 against Idaho. Running mate Casey Reilly had the longest Grizzly rush against Idaho, 37 yards. For the game he rambled for 84 yards on 10 carries.

But the Grizzlies, who have been averaging just 9 yards passing a game, were only 1 of 8 for 16 yards with one interception.

Montana coaches expected Idaho to run more, but Seefried tossed 22 passes, completing 13 for 112 yards. Curt Reynolds and Mick Dennehy garnered two interceptions for the Grizzlies.

Doctor and Riley, who both rushed for more than 100 yards in the Vandals' romp over Colorado State last week, were held to just 25 and 48 yards respectively, and no run longer than 7 yards. Idaho netted 163 yards rushing.

Jerry Hendren, Idaho's all-time leading pass receiver, who played in the Vandals' 45-54 loss to the Grizzlies in 1969, returned to Dornblaser Field as a coach for Idaho. This trip was a happier one for Hendren, who recalled that Montana's Roy Robinson played the best defensive game against him during his three years at Idaho. After the Montana game, Hendren went on to a season of 49 receptions for 734 yards, and All-American honors. The next summer he met Roy again in the training camp of the Denver Broncos. "Roy is as fine a person I have ever met, but he's hard-nosed on the field," Hendren added.

His first year with the Broncos, Hendren played little as a receiver, but returned 20 kickoffs for a 24.6 average.

The first week of spring practice this year he separated his right shoulder. When he returned after a week's rest, Jerry separated the other shoulder. So he came back to Idaho as a graduate student and is now coaching the receivers.

"I've always wanted to get into coaching," he said. "If I can help another guy get into the pros, that's nearly as gratifying as playing there myself. I can't say if I'll ever play again."

Saturday Jerry relayed the plays called by an assistant coach in the press box to players he shuffled in and out of the lineup. "Seefried is only a sophomore, and we want to take that pressure off him, so the staff calls all the plays. He of course can audible, check off to another play on the line of scrimmage. But Rick came of age out there today,"

The Grizzlies wish he had waited another week.